

MAKING ENDS MEET

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In October 2015, as part of my weekly puzzle segment on NPR, I conducted a two-week creative writing competition. The object was to compose a sentence of exactly 10 words, each ending in the same letter of the alphabet. My example:

- Dartmouth frosh clash with Pittsburgh church parish, clinch fifth triumph.

Competitors could use any ending letter they wished. Entries were judged on sensibility, naturalness of syntax, and overall elegance.

More than 1,500 entries came in. The most common ending letter, not surprisingly, was E, followed by N, S, T, and Y. Almost every letter of the alphabet was submitted at least once. Usually, though, the sentences using the rarer ending letters either read awkwardly or didn't make a lot of sense.

Below, for posterity, is a compilation of my favorite entries. Some of them were timely and played off current events. I hope you marvel at them as much as I do.

Runners-Up

- Almost perfect that first attempt, but it just wasn't right. -- Julie Nichols
- Elder pair discover newspaper puzzlemaster eager for their clever answer. -- Joseph Tobias
- * The compassionate judge gave the contrite juvenile one more chance. -- Blaine Deal
- On vacation in Caribbean, sun can turn ashen skin brown. -- Paul Koning
- Crazy, pesky country fly may destroy my easy, sleepy tranquility. -- Jill Hansen
- Don't forget that fruit tart that got left out overnight. -- Ed Pegg
- Frustrated, tired, and overwhelmed, she'd decided Brad had indeed cheated. -- Sarah Lipson
- Even stern, stubborn women can soften when open men listen. -- Janet Levatin
- Because the crankcase came loose, the engine made excessive noise. -- Bob Gookin
- The more we pollute, the more we cause climate change. -- Mike Strong
- Isn't it just great that Pitt beat Connecticut last night? -- Lloyd Alterman
- Despite the distance, we are close because we have Skype. -- Karen Robertson
- Today society may very likely apply crazy "Marty McFly" technology. -- Patrick Berry
- Beautiful Chanel model will reveal novel all natural wool apparel. -- David Miller
- "Prince George, come here, please!" spoke Kate while Charlotte ate. -- John Heydens

- His Holiness Francis wows throngs; millions delirious as Mass concludes. -- Rudolph Palmer
- Volkswagen collusion in misbegotten pollution calculation can weaken German reputation. -- Anne Kaup-Fett
- [Newspaper headline:] Unbeaten Kenyan Outran American; Won Boston Marathon Again In Rain -- Andrew Doucette
- Sanders dismisses Mrs. Clinton's emails, suggests debaters discuss serious issues. -- Dave Moran
- Furious Los Angeles Dodgers fans miss fabulous Mets-Cubs Series. -- Steve Gilmore
- Mets surpass rivals as hapless Yankees miss this season's Series. -- Will Robinson
- Children groan when stern policemen begin crackdown on Halloween fun. -- Patrick Berry
- "Titus Andronicus was Shakespeare's opus," says ridiculous student's erroneous thesis. -- Noah King
- Miss Manners always answers readers' submissions, whereas Landers fabricates questions. -- Jonathan Black
- Funny way they play "Jeopardy!": They may reply only interrogatively. -- Patrick Berry
- Before we solve the puzzle challenge, we prepare some coffee. -- Steph Merryman
- [Joke entry -- greeting the Marx Brothers:] "Hello, Groucho, hello Chico, hello Harpo, hello Gummo, hello Zeppo!" -- Steve Baggish
- Please congratulate the one whose creative sentence made the grade. -- Matthew Schultz

The winner:

- Can neurosurgeon Ben Carson pin down Republican nomination in 'Sixteen? -- Kate Simpson